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MODERN LEARNING AIDS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: PERSPECTIVES FROM CRIMINOLOGY STUDENTS

Shirley P. Ayeo-eo[1], Elvira d. Bersabal[2], Yusuf Istanto[3]
[1]*College of Criminology, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Nueva Ecija, Philippines*
[2]*College of Criminal Justice Education, Western Philippines University, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines*
[3]*Faculty of Law, Universitas Muria Kudus, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT
In the digital age, the use of modern learning aids such as AI chatbots, grammar checkers, and research tools has become integral to students' academic practices. This study investigates criminology students' experiences and perceptions regarding using these tools and their implications for academic integrity. Utilizing a quantitative-descriptive design, data were gathered from 376 criminology students from a selected higher education institution in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines through structured surveys. Findings reveal that chat-based tools and grammar checkers are used most for assignments and topic generation. While students generally understand plagiarism rules and value honesty, many lack in-depth knowledge of academic integrity, especially regarding AI-generated content. The tools are perceived to enhance writing skills, reduce stress, and improve academic performance, yet concerns were raised about decreased originality, critical thinking, and over-dependence. Students express mixed feelings, recognizing both these technologies' benefits and ethical challenges. The study concludes that respondents use various modern learning aids for academic tasks. Majority of the respondents show awareness of academic integrity and that the tools significantly improve academic output and efficiency but pose challenges such as reduced originality and over-dependence. Furthermore, the study shed light on the ethical considerations and potential misuse of these tools in criminology education. It is then recommended that a deeper understanding on responsible use of modern learning aids, supported by proper guidance is much warranted to uphold the integrity of criminology education.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Integrity, Criminology Education, Learning Aids, Artificial Intelligence, Student Ethics*

INTRODUCTION
"Technology will not replace great teachers, but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational." George Couros (Genially Student, 2022)

In the digital age, integrating modern learning aids such as online platforms, grammar checkers, and paraphrasing tools has transformed educational practices. These tools offer students enhanced access to information and support in completing academic tasks. However, their widespread use raises concerns about academic integrity, particularly regarding originality and ethical scholarship. This study aims to explore criminology students' perspectives on using modern learning aids and their impact on academic integrity.

As future law enforcement officials, criminology students face unique academic and ethical training. A case study of criminology undergraduates in a private Philippine institution found that digital-era dishonesty posed significant threats to their moral and professional formation. (Gupit & Cuevas, 2023) Given their expected roles in upholding justice, maintaining robust academic integrity is paramount in their education.

The intersection of technology-facilitated learning and criminology education raises critical concerns: How can tools intended to enhance learning inadvertently undermine the ethical foundations of students destined for public service? Research emphasizes that digital tools can enable misconduct without proper integrity education, especially for future public servants. (Hossain, Celik, & Hertel, 2024)

Globally, the proliferation of digital tools in education has led to increased instances of academic dishonesty. A study by Gupit and Cuevas (2023) highlighted that the accessibility of online resources has made it easier for students to engage in dishonest practices, such as plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, challenging institutions to uphold academic standards in the digital era. Internationally, the shift to remote learning during COVID-19 led to heightened concerns over file-sharing, contract cheating, and AI-assisted plagiarism. For example, a 2023 survey in Canada recorded increased outsourcing behaviors in remote courses. (Stoesz, Quesnel, & De Jaeger, 2023) Similarly, university policies grapple with defining and detecting "AI-giarism," pointing to a need for updated frameworks. (Ka Yuk Chan, 2023)

Recent studies have emphasized the growing impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tools on academic integrity. Chan (2023) coined the term "AI-plagiarism" to describe plagiarism facilitated by generative AI, reporting that 393 undergraduates demonstrated varying perceptions of ethical AI use, with many lacking awareness of institutional policies. Chan's study established metrics to evaluate the responsible use of AI in academic settings and recommended integrating AI ethics education into university curricula to mitigate risks of misuse (Chan, 2023). Similarly, Susnjak (2022) assessed ChatGPT's capabilities in solving mathematics and programming problems, warning that its accessibility and accuracy threaten the validity of

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online exams, mainly when institutions rely heavily on take-home or unproctored assessments (Susnjak, 2022).

The shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified concerns about academic integrity in the Philippines. Aguilar (2021) highlights in his study that concerns about low education quality, poor student integrity, and violations of teachers' ethical standards raise questions about the effectiveness of online learning in the Philippines.

Locally, in Nueva Ecija, the establishment of Community e-Learning Resource Centers (CeLRCs) has facilitated access to digital learning tools for students and faculty. Moralde (2023) reported that while these centers have improved educational access, they also present challenges in monitoring and maintaining academic integrity, as students have greater autonomy in utilizing online resources. Cabanatuan City, home to several criminology programs, the widespread adoption of online modalities likely mirrors national trends. Though concrete local data is limited, anecdotal reports and practices from surrounding institutions suggest increasing e-proctoring and integrity policies. At the same time, cheating continues to pose challenges in remote assessments.

While these studies clarify trends and behaviors, few specifically target criminology students in Philippine localities like Cabanatuan. Additionally, frameworks for ethical AI use in criminology curricula remain underdeveloped. There is a need for localized empirical data and tailored interventions.

Hence, this study is grounded in the need to understand how criminology students engage with modern learning aids and the implications of their usage on academic integrity. As digital tools such as AI-powered platforms, online resources, and educational apps become increasingly embedded in academic life, it is crucial to examine the types of learning aids commonly used, the frequency and purpose of their application, and students' awareness of integrity standards about their use.

By exploring the perceived benefits and drawbacks of these tools, along with their ethical implications and potential for misuse, the study aims to generate insights vital to shaping responsible digital practices and preserving ethical standards in criminology education. In this field, integrity is academic and foundational to future professional conduct.

Objectives of the Study

This study examines modern learning aids in academic work and their perceived impact on academic integrity among criminology students.

Specifically, to answer the following questions:

a. identify the modern learning aids commonly used by criminology students in completing academic requirements;
b. determine the frequency and purposes of using these tools in academic tasks;
c. assess the students' awareness and understanding of academic integrity about using learning aids;
d. explore the perceived benefits and drawbacks of using modern learning tools in their academic performance and
e. analyze the ethical implications and potential misuse of these technologies in criminology education.

Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative-descriptive research design to explore modern learning aids and their perceived impact on academic integrity among criminology students. Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire comprising six sections: usage and frequency of learning aids, awareness of academic integrity, perceived benefits and drawbacks, ethical considerations, and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The study involved 376 purposively selected criminology students from all year levels at a higher education institution in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, who had experience using modern learning tools in online, face-to-face, or hybrid settings. Surveys were administered through digital and printed formats to ensure accessibility and participation.

Data analysis employed descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean to determine patterns of tool usage, student awareness of academic integrity, and perceived effects of learning technologies. Thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses to extract more profound insights into the ethical use of these tools in criminology education. Ethical standards were strictly followed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity throughout the research process.

Presentation of Findings

Usage of Modern Learning Aids

The study explored the specific tools students utilize and the frequency of their use in academic tasks. The tables present data that portrays the respondents' perspectives and practices in using modern learning aids in their academic tasks.

Table 1. Criminology students commonly use modern learning aids in completing academic requirements.

Tools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Chat-based tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard)	246	65.4
Grammar checkers (e.g., Grammarly)	220	58.5
Research tools (e.g., Google Scholar)	191	50.8
Paraphrasing tools	145	38.6
Citation generators (e.g., Mendeley)	72	19.1
Others	11	2.9
Total	885	

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The table indicates that among the range of modern academic tools students utilize, chat-based platforms such as ChatGPT and Bard emerged as the most frequently used, with nearly two-thirds of the respondents indicating they rely on these for their studies. These finding highlights students' strong inclination toward tools that offer immediate content creation and idea development assistance. On the opposite end of the spectrum, only a small fraction of the respondents reported using tools categorized under "Others," while citation generators are vital for ensuring academic integrity, were also notably underutilized.

This pattern reveals that students gravitate toward AI-driven solutions that offer quick and accessible support in generating and refining academic text. Tools such as grammar checkers and research databases like Google Scholar also ranked highly, reflecting students' focus on enhancing clarity and sourcing relevant information efficiently. However, the relatively low engagement with citation tools suggests that while students actively produce content, they may not be equally committed to formal referencing practices, an essential academic skill. Furthermore, with the total responses far exceeding the total number of participants, it becomes evident that students are not relying on a single platform but combining several tools to support various aspects of their academic workload.

This result underscores a dual implication: while using AI and digital tools reflects students' adaptability and digital literacy, it also points to a potential gap in understanding or valuing academic standards such as citation ethics. Educational institutions may need to strengthen support and guidance on responsible tool use to ensure students benefit from technology without compromising academic rigor.

Meanwhile, these findings align with Lund et al.'s (2025) study, which reported high awareness of AI tools for text generation among students but a marked disparity in how they perceive citation-focused misconduct, it showed that fully AI-written work was seen as serious plagiarism, while smaller AI-supported tasks were viewed as less severe.

Similarly, Ateeq and Alzoraiki (2024) found that AI's educational utility correlated strongly with grammar and writing assistance. However, they emphasized that ethical and policy frameworks must address integrity gaps in referencing and original expression.

Table 2. ***Frequency and purposes of using these tools in academic tasks.***

Academic Task	Most Frequent Ratings (N)	Observation
Writing Essays	3 (146), 2 (108), 4 (63)	Often used but not heavily relied on
Generating Research Topics	3 (146), 2 (117), 4 (58)	Popular for brainstorming
Completing Assignments	3 (124), 4 (65), 5 (59)	Higher intensity of use
Making Presentations	3 (131), 2 (106), 4 (54)	Moderate use
Crafting Reaction Papers	3 (126), 2 (120), 4 (46)	Reliance is slightly lower

The findings highlight a clear spectrum of tool usage across different academic tasks. Completing assignments recorded the highest engagement, with many students frequently leveraging digital aids, indicating a notable reliance on these tools. Conversely, crafting reaction papers reflected the lowest tool use, suggesting that students reserved more personal reflection tasks for independent work.

Overall, the results show that students predominantly employ AI-driven and research tools for tasks involving content creation and analytical thinking, such as generating ideas and writing assignments. Their use diminishes when it comes to more introspective or evaluative activities, such as reaction papers, underscoring a selective, rather than blanket, application of these learning aids. This dynamic reveals a strategic integration of tools to maximize productivity while maintaining autonomy in tasks deemed more reflective or demanding personal insight.

The implications are significant: students appear conscious of the line between legitimate support and over-reliance. Their measured use suggests an underlying respect for academic integrity in reflective assignments, juxtaposed against a pragmatic embrace of technological assistance in content-heavy tasks. For educators, this pattern calls for targeted guidance, especially in citation practices and critical thinking, to ensure tool use enhances learning without compromising authenticity. Embedding structured training on ethical tool usage can help sustain this balance, reinforcing responsible digital literacy.

These findings align with prior Research on the nuanced role of AI in academic work. Aguilar (2021) found that while students derive considerable advantages from online tools, such as reduced stress and improved grammar, they also voiced concerns about the erosion of originality and integrity in writing. Similarly, Ateeq and Alzoraiki (2024) reported that although grammar and writing aids are positively viewed, there remains a deficit in formal frameworks governing citation and ethical use, highlighting the need for policy-driven intervention to promote academic accountability.

Awareness of Academic Integrity

This section presents the findings on students' awareness of academic integrity, including their understanding of plagiarism, ethical tool use, and responsible academic behavior. The results highlight how students navigate academic honesty in the context of modern digital learning tools.

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Table 3. Students' awareness and understanding of academic integrity about the use of learning aids.

Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Combined (4+5)
I understand what academic integrity means.	80	139	58.2%
I am aware of university policies on plagiarism and cheating.	133	145	74.0%
Using AI-generated content without proper citation is unethical.	107	127	62.2%
Academic honesty is important for my future profession.	164	129	77.7%

Among the awareness measures, the highest level of agreement was seen in the statement, "I believe academic honesty is important for my future profession, "Conversely, "I understand what academic integrity means" had the lowest combined agreement, signaling that while many students value integrity, fewer fully comprehend its definition and scope.

The results suggest that students hold strong positive attitudes toward academic honesty and understand its importance for their future careers. However, their fundamental grasp of academic integrity, especially how it applies to AI-generated content, is less secure. This gap may hinder their consistently applying integrity principles in a digital learning environment.

The implications are clear: Universities should continue emphasizing integrity as a value and reinforce a foundational understanding of what constitutes integrity, how it translates into daily practice, and how it intersects with emerging tools. Training must address concepts like AI-assisted writing, proper citation, and policy awareness to bridge the gap between attitude and understanding.

This interpretation aligns with studies highlighting similar patterns; Susnjak (2022) warns that while students may use tools like ChatGPT, many lack clarity on how its use intersects with cheating definitions, underscoring the need for clarity and policy reform. Likewise, Ozguven et al. (2024) argue that appreciating academic integrity must be accompanied by critical thinking and transparency measures, particularly when AI content generation blurs traditional boundaries, reinforcing the necessity for curricula that combine ethical literacy with technological competence.

Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks

The Perceived Benefits and Challenges presents insights into how students view the impact of modern learning aids, particularly AI-based tools, on their academic experiences. This highlights that while grammar improvement and idea generation are top benefits, the most prevalent challenges relate to reduced critical thinking and academic integrity issues, confirming students' struggle in balancing tool use and independent learning.

Table 4. Perceived benefits of using modern learning tools in their academic performance.

Benefit	Count	Percentage (%)
Improves Grammar And Writing	278	73.9
Helps With Idea Generation	275	73.1
Reduces Academic Stress	169	44.9
Makes Assignments Easier	141	37.5
Saves Time	120	31.9
Others	12	3.2

The results show that the most perceived benefit of using modern learning aids was improvement in grammar and writing skills, identified by the respondents. Closely following this was idea generation support. On the other hand, the least recognized benefit was categorized under "Others, "Timesaving was also relatively low at 31.9%, suggesting that while helpful, efficiency may not be the primary appeal of these tools.

Overall, the findings suggest that students are primarily drawn to modern learning aids for their ability to enhance the quality of written outputs and stimulate academic creativity. This reflects a growing reliance on AI and related tools to bolster academic performance and reduce cognitive load. However, the lower selection of benefits like stress reduction and timesaving implies that the perceived advantages are more academically focused than personally convenient.

The implication of these results highlights educators' need to integrate such tools into the learning environment responsibly, guiding students on maximizing their benefits while maintaining academic integrity. The strong emphasis on writing support and idea generation reinforces the importance of these tools in formative learning stages, particularly in contexts where students may struggle with language or conceptual development.

Song and Song (2023) found that AI-assisted tools significantly enhanced EFL learners' grammar, vocabulary, and writing motivation, concluding that these tools improved writing organization and accuracy. Also, Chen & Gong's (2025) study reported that AI writing supports improved writing performance and facilitates idea generation and organizational structure, aligning directly with the benefits recognized by criminology students.

Meanwhile, Sorrel's (2022) analysis cautioned that while AI writing tools could reduce repetitive workload and offer structural support, they often generated bland, uninspired content lacking creativity. This suggests that AI may undermine originality and depth, echoing student concerns about overreliance and diminished critical thinking.

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Table 5. Perceived drawbacks of using modern learning tools in their academic performance.

Challenge	Count	Percentage (%)
Reduced critical thinking	214	56.9%
Lack of originality	187	49.7%
Risk of plagiarism	186	49.5%
Over-reliance on technology	168	44.7%
Confusion about proper citation	151	40.2%

The result of the study on perceived challenges in using modern learning aids reveals that the highest reported challenge was reduced critical thinking, followed closely by lack of originality and risk of plagiarism. The last reported challenge was confusion about proper citation. These results show that while students benefit from using AI tools, a significant portion are aware of the cognitive and ethical drawbacks, particularly in areas involving originality and independent reasoning. The result suggests a growing tension between convenience and academic rigor, where efficiency may sometimes compromise deeper learning. Students seem to recognize that over-reliance on these aids could diminish their critical thinking and learning autonomy.

This has important implications for educational institutions. It emphasizes integrating digital literacy and ethical AI use into academic curricula to ensure students benefit from these tools and maintain academic integrity and intellectual growth. Proper training on the responsible use of AI tools could mitigate these concerns.

Meanwhile, Ju (2023) conducted an experimental study showing that complete reliance on generative AI for writing tasks significantly reduced learning accuracy by 25.1%, demonstrating that over-reliance can directly impair critical thinking and comprehension. Also, Forero and Herrera-Suárez (2023) found that although students appreciated ChatGPT for understanding complex concepts, its use led to decreased performance and reduced independent thinking in physics assessments, signaling real-world academic drawbacks. Lastly, Prokhorova, Gujrati, and Uygun (2024) reported heightened concerns about plagiarism and original authorship when students used AI chatbots, highlighting worries about academic integrity that align with student-reported fears.

On the other hand, Yusuf, Pervin, and Román-González (2024) took a more optimistic perspective, suggesting that while AI introduces ethical dilemmas, it can also reform higher education by promoting equitable access and encouraging the development of ethical frameworks, not necessarily inhibiting critical thinking when appropriately integrated.

Ethical Considerations

This section presents students' views on the ethical use of modern learning tools, focusing on responsibility, regulation, and feelings of guilt. It highlights the need for clear guidelines to ensure proper and honest use in academic settings.

Table 6. Ethical implications and potential misuse of these technologies in criminology education

Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Combined (4 + 5)
Using modern tools is acceptable if used responsibly.	195	129	86.2%
These tools should be regulated in academic settings.	105	181	76.1%
I feel guilty when I rely too much on these tools.	150	143	77.7%
There should be guidelines on usage.	160	153	83.2%

The findings on ethical considerations reveal that the highest agreement was with the statement "Using modern tools is acceptable if used responsibly," where combined respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests a prevailing belief that the responsible use of technology in academics is justifiable. In contrast, the lowest level of agreement was observed in the statement, "These tools should be regulated in academic settings," with a combined agreement. While still a significant majority, this indicates slightly less consensus on the need for institutional control or policy regarding tool usage.

Overall, the data reflect a strong awareness of ethical dimensions in academic tool usage. Most respondents acknowledge the acceptability of modern tools when used correctly and support implementing guidelines. Additionally, many students feel guilt when over-relying on these tools, reflecting internalized academic ethics and a concern for personal academic integrity.

These findings imply that while students embrace the advantages of technological tools, they also recognize the need for ethical boundaries and institutional frameworks. This highlights the importance of integrating digital literacy and ethics education in academic curricula to guide students in responsibly using technology.

Meanwhile, Chan and Hu (2023) found that university students widely supported the notion that generative AI tools are beneficial if used responsibly while also expressing concerns about transparency and misuse, reflecting the high agreement on responsible usage and the call for structured guidelines. Furthermore, the Impact of AI Guilt on Students (2025) reported that many students experience guilt when using AI-generated content excessively, echoing the 77.7% in our study who admitted feeling guilty, emphasizing internalized ethics among learners.

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Student Insights on Modern Learning Tools

This captures students' personal experiences and reflections on modern learning tools, revealing positive impacts such as improved academic performance and negative concerns like reduced critical thinking and over-dependence.

Table 7. Student Insights on Modern Learning Tools

Theme	Specific Insight	Quotes
Positive Impacts	Improved grammar and writing confidence	"It helps my academic performance so much; my academic performance improved because of these."
	Faster understanding and timesaving	"It makes my school life easier..."
	Helpful for working students	"...but I do not abuse its benefits because I know I will not learn so much."
	Enhanced motivation and information access	"It helps me stay motivated and find more reliable references."
Negative Impacts	Decreased originality and critical thinking	"It slowly kills my critical thinking process."
	Increased laziness and procrastination	"Sometimes I just let it do the work for me."
	Guilt and ethical concerns	"I feel guilty after using it too much."
	Overdependence on AI tools	"I know I will not learn so much if I rely on it."

The qualitative results revealed that the most prominent positive impact perceived by students was improved grammar and writing confidence, enhanced motivation, and quicker understanding of academic materials. These insights were repeatedly supported by direct quotes such as "It helps my academic performance so much..." and "It makes my school life easier...". Conversely, the least mentioned but significant negative impact was overdependence on AI tools, with students expressing concerns like "I know I will not learn so much if I rely on it," highlighting an internal conflict between utility and authenticity.

Overall, the findings indicate a dual-sided experience among students: while modern tools improve efficiency, grammar, and motivation—particularly for working students—there is also a growing awareness of how such tools may diminish original thinking, foster procrastination, and generate guilt over ethical boundaries. This shows a nuanced usage pattern where benefits are maximized but not without psychological and educational costs.

These findings imply that while academic AI tools serve as valuable aids, their long-term use should be carefully balanced to prevent the erosion of core academic skills such as critical thinking and ethical awareness. Institutions clearly need to develop guidelines and integrate digital literacy programs that address both the utility and the responsible use of such technologies.

Meanwhile, Chan and Hu (2023) explored university students' views on generative AI and found alignment with our findings: Students appreciated AI tools for enhancing writing quality and idea generation but also voiced concerns about reduced critical thinking and ethical dilemmas. Also, Sumakul et al. (2022) conducted Research with Indonesian EFL students, and the results showed that the students had positive perceptions of using the AI app. The students enjoyed the learning, and the AI app helped the students in their writing. Moreover, this study also suggests several things to consider when integrating AI into writing classes.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that students generally accept the use of modern learning aids, particularly AI-based tools, as long as they are used within responsible and ethical boundaries. A notable proportion also express personal discomfort, with over three-quarters admitting they feel guilty when overly dependent on these tools highlighting internal moral checks alongside institutional concerns.

These findings suggest that students are not blind to the ethical dilemmas posed by modern tools. They largely support the development of clear guidelines to navigate acceptable use, while maintaining the flexibility to benefit from technological support. The emphasis on responsibility over regulation may reflect students' desire for autonomy combined with structured ethical education, rather than rigid restrictions.

Across all dimensions of the study usage patterns, perceived benefits, awareness of academic integrity, and ethical concerns a consistent narrative emerges students value modern learning aids, particularly AI tools, for their academic benefits, but remain cautious about the risks. The most used tools, such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, fulfill core academic needs such as idea development and grammar enhancement. However, their popularity also raises concerns about reduced critical thinking, originality, and proper citation.

The measured application of these tools across tasks high in assignments and brainstorming, lower in reflective writing suggests that students exercise discernment, understanding when technology enhances their work and when it may compromise authenticity. Still, gaps in understanding core concepts of academic integrity and citation ethics remain evident.

These findings reinforce the need for higher education institutions to: Introduce structured digital literacy programs that include instruction on ethical tool usage, citation protocols, and the limits of AI-generated content. Promote awareness campaigns and workshops on academic integrity, focusing on nuanced understandings of plagiarism in the context of AI-assisted writing. Create clear institutional policies and guidelines for the use of AI and other modern learning aids in academic tasks. And encourage reflective academic practices, particularly in writing

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and critical analysis, to counteract over-reliance and promote independent thinking.

Criminology students' engagement with modern learning aids reflects both adaptability to digital learning environments and emerging challenges in academic integrity and critical thinking. While they benefit significantly from AI-powered tools, especially in writing and idea development, there is a pressing need for balanced, ethical integration into academic practices. The study's findings call for targeted interventions at the policy, curriculum, and instructional levels to foster responsible, effective, and integrity-driven tool usage in higher education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that criminology students use various modern learning aids, with chat-based tools and grammar checkers being the most common. These tools are frequently used for academic tasks such as assignments and Research, reflecting their integration into students' study habits. While many students show general awareness of academic integrity, there remains a need for deeper understanding, especially in the ethical use and citation of AI-generated content. The tools significantly improve academic output and efficiency but pose challenges such as reduced originality and over-dependence.

Furthermore, the study shed light on the ethical considerations and potential misuse of these tools in criminology education. Overall, the findings underscore the need for informed, responsible use of modern learning aids, supported by proper guidance and institutional policies to uphold academic integrity and enhance educational outcomes.

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